

What is claimed

1. A vacuum cleaner, comprising:  
a housing;  
a nozzle inlet;  
a suction generator carried on said housing; and  
5 a dirt collection assembly carried on said housing, said dirt collection assembly including (a) a dirt vessel having an outer sidewall, an inner sidewall, a bottom wall, an inlet and an open end and (b) a filter assembly including a base that covers said open end of said dirt vessel, a manifold housing, a filter chamber and a filter element held in said filter chamber.
2. The vacuum cleaner of claim 1 wherein said filter element is annular in shape.
3. The vacuum cleaner of claim 2, wherein said filter assembly further includes a frustoconical air guide that directs air through said filter element.
4. The vacuum cleaner of claim 3, wherein said air guide includes a discharge opening and said dirt vessel includes a discharge passageway, said discharge opening being in fluid communication with said discharge passageway.

5. The vacuum cleaner of claim 4, wherein said air guide includes a first channel and said base includes a second channel, said filter element being held in said first and second channels.
6. The vacuum cleaner of claim 5, wherein said base includes a screen section.
7. The vacuum cleaner of claim 6, wherein an annular dirt collection chamber is provided in said dirt vessel by said outer sidewall, said inner sidewall and said base.
8. The vacuum cleaner of claim 7, wherein said inlet is provided in said outer sidewall and said inlet is oriented substantially tangentially with respect to said outer sidewall.
9. The vacuum cleaner of claim 8, wherein said inner sidewall is concentrically received in said base.
10. The vacuum cleaner of claim 9, wherein said screen section of said base is concentrically received around said inner sidewall.
11. The vacuum cleaner of claim 10, wherein said filter element is concentrically received around said screen section.

12. The vacuum cleaner of claim 11, wherein at least a portion of said frustoconical air guide is concentrically received within said filter element.
13. The vacuum cleaner of claim 12, wherein said inner sidewall defines said discharge passageway.
14. The vacuum cleaner of claim 13, wherein said filter element includes a support frame and a pleated filter media.
15. The vacuum cleaner of claim 14, wherein said housing includes a nozzle section, including said nozzle inlet, and a canister section.
16. The vacuum cleaner of claim 15, wherein said nozzle section and said canister section are pivotally connected together.
17. A method of directing air through an annular filter element, comprising:  
routing air radially outwardly through said annular filter element; and  
discharging air axially through a center opening in said annular filter element.
18. A dirt collection assembly, comprising:  
a dirt cup including an outer sidewall, an inner sidewall, a bottom wall,  
an inlet and an open end; and

a filter assembly including a partition that seats over said open end of said dirt cup, a housing and a filter element, said housing and said partition defining a filter chamber holding said filter element.

19. The dirt collection assembly of claim 18, wherein said filter element is annular in shape.

20. The dirt collection assembly of claim 19, wherein said filter assembly further includes a frustoconical air guide that directs air through said filter element.

21. The dirt collection assembly of claim 20, wherein said air guide includes a discharge opening and said dirt cup includes a discharge passageway, said discharge opening being in fluid communication with said discharge passageway.